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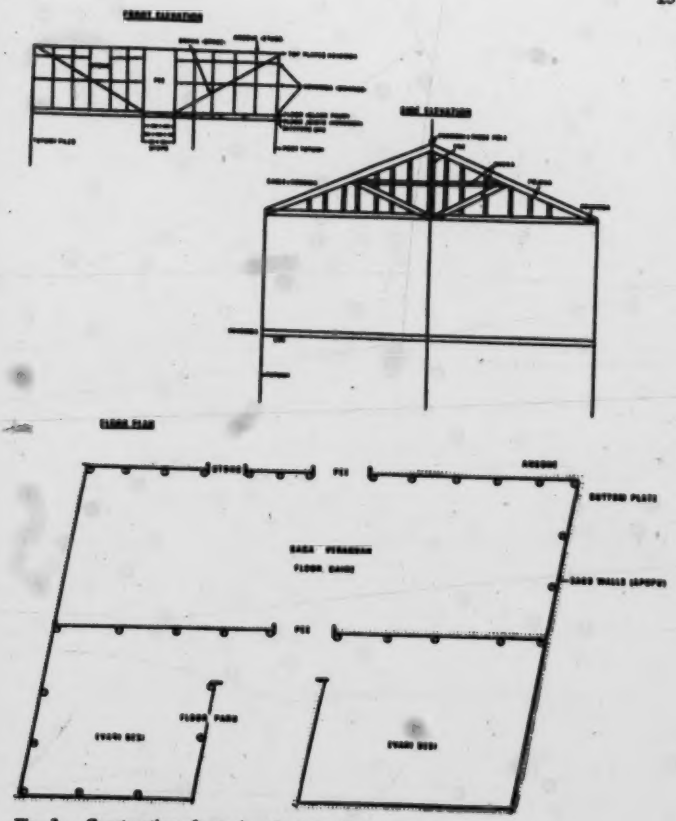

Fig. 3. Construction of a modern Orokaiva house.

(*haruu*) in the heat of the day, and sometimes sleep there at night. Yams are stored under the roof. 343

Plastic Arts. As Mauss (1967: 96) has suggested, the best starting point in the description of plastic arts is the decoration of the body. Even though the elaborate hair dressings described by Williams are no longer seen for everyday wear, every opportunity is taken to decorate the hair in some way, especially with a few feathers. It is at the ceremonial dances that the full range of body decoration is seen: face painting, feather head-dresses, ornaments. The latter are worn on the forehead, held in the teeth, suspended from ears and nose, as necklets and as armlets. 302 301

partners, while objects of mediation are not imaginary and magical, but have a real existence. I shall deal with these two aspects in turn.

3. *Coconut as an Object of Mediation*

Coconut has several culinary uses: it is eaten raw; soup is made of the flesh; the squeezed flesh produces coconut cream in which taro and delicacies such as river crabs may be cooked. Young coconuts are cut open at the top and used for a refreshing drink. Coconut is reserved for two kinds of everyday food gift: cooked dishes offered to guests and young coconut offered to visitors on arrival. Waddell's figures for coconut transactions are surprisingly low (less than 1 lb. per week disposed of in an average household). In Inonda, where the climate favours the coconut, there has been sporadic commercial exploitation of the nut.

Coconuts are also a feasting food. At ordinary harvest feasts and bridewealth payments they are seen on display platforms along with taro and other vegetables. Williams (1930: 44) reports that they used to be placed under a taboo when a large feast was pending. I have already mentioned that at mortuary feasts they are the principal object of mediation between the plant emblem group of the deceased and the village which has provided services to the deceased at the time of death (See Williams 1930: 223–6). I saw a variant of this ceremony at Hohorita in 1967. The plant emblem groups of the deceased couple provided massive gifts displayed on a platform: feast taro, tins of fish, cartons of flour, corned beef in tins, sugar-cane, pots of cooked vegetable food, small bags of salt, smoked meat, a dead pig suspended from a stick, rice, bread, an abundance of betelnut and carved taro suspended from horizontal poles placed above the platform, while at least 1000 lbs. of coconuts, strung to poles supporting each other diagonally, were seen everywhere among the other gifts.

Coconut is correctly believed to be a valuable adjunct to children's diet, as it provides first-class protein. The belief is explained by Orokaiva in a myth quoted by Williams (1928: 122) according to which the first child ever to eat a coconut grew miraculously overnight. Children do eat a good deal of it and it is also fed regularly to dogs and chickens. Orokaiva also regard the effects of coconuts on dogs as miraculous. As neither dogs nor children have any other substantial supply of first-class protein, the coconut relieves a very real diet deficiency. Whatever religious significance is given to the coconut is related to this.

Coconut oil is used as a cosmetic for hair and body, not only to enhance beauty but also for its magical efficacy. In a ritual performed over a man-slayer, a coconut was broken over his head as a purificatory and 'defensive' device in the sense that the fluid would drive away dangerous spirits (1930: 175). With the same end in view, the bodies of female initiands and certain ornaments worn at dances are rubbed with coconut oil (1930: 207). It would appear, in view of this evidence, that the coconut is in general identified with *ivo* communicated by the dead to the living. The coconuts of a dead leader are thought to contain his *ivo* in a form which is communicable, not to his kinsmen to whom these coconuts are taboo, but particularly to his affines. The quoted ritual uses of the coconut are all associated with some contact with the world of death, i.e. critical situations in which the living have been in contact with death and need the help of the dead to obtain *ivo*. While this *ivo* is communicated, through the mediation

5: Schwimmer E-4,5 (1966-1967) 1973
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Mountain Orokaiva

Hence, *otohu* might serve as symbols of high social status whereas *hambo* are less useful in this regard, being worn only intermittently and never with a purely social purpose in mind.

The usefulness of *otohu* as status symbols is further enhanced by the fact that they are transferable from generation to generation. The Member of the House of Assembly for the Northern District told me he always carried his *otohu* with him when meeting his constituents and that he would display it conspicuously attached to his betelnut bag, because a great many people would know this *otohu*: it had belonged to his *epe* who had been a famous war chief and sorcerer. He believed that people in his constituency had great respect for this *otohu*. He made it sound almost as though he was carrying the *insigne* of a hereditary chieftainship, but in fact the basis of his influence was far more complex: it was in part agnatic, in part uterine, and in large part personal. Nonetheless, the *otohu* was obviously very useful to him in establishing new social relations.

Whatever social effect a *hambo* might have would depend mostly on the beauty of its construction and the rarity of its materials. While informants might sometimes think its history and associations worthy of mention, a *hambo's* association with a particular family is usually rather loose, as the right to wear *hambo* of a particular type is never, to my knowledge, restricted to a family. The main effect and power of a *hambo* appears to be aesthetic. It is used to impress partners in a dispute, dancing partners or young women whose passions one hopes to arouse.

Unlike the *otohu*, the *hambo* does not otherwise emphasise the identity of the wearer. One the contrary, a fully decorated person, wearing a head-dress, *hambo* and face-paint, is supposed not to be recognisable as a person. One should on no account address him by name. He represents an *embahi* and, as such, is completely depersonalised. More specifically, the dancer represents a natural species – a pig, a wallaby or, in the case of women, a bird, a butterfly, a flower. The details of these identifications need to be studied more closely. The significance of the decorations is very similar to that of the masks used for dancing in other parts of New Guinea. The face and body become a medium for decorating: the individual assumes the persona of an ancestor; his private existence is covered over to display only his social function.

This total lack of personal identity inherent in the *hambo* makes the object easily transferable from one individual to another. it always belongs essentially to the ancestors and is thus alive with spirit. By transferring it to another, a man emphasises that he and the recipient share some link with the spirit world and this implies amity, the primeval absence of strife. It also probably implies in some way the message of the sacred flutes by which man's contact with the spirit world is established. Further research no doubt will enable us to be more precise about the meaning of these transactions. They occur in a great many social contexts: *hambo* are given away to settle a quarrel, to pay bridewealth, to establish and maintain an important friendship. They are frequently lent to persons about to dance at a feast, and a gift of meat is then required from the borrower. They are lent by the *kogumbari* expert for a similar consideration, and are also bartered and sold. Some people, and not always the most prominent, make large collections of them, and most people of rank have a good store of them, as they are a necessary part of the ceremonial gift exchange system. From

8: Waddell & Krinks E-4,5 (1964-1965) 1968 QJ23 Orokaiva QJ23

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Plate 11. Taro, pigmeat, arara, rice and tinned fish on display in Inonda prior to presentation to a Girua settler.

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Plate 12. Stalls at Popondetta market, where people from Inonda frequently sell their produce.

574 £2.90 by 16 relatives of the host's eldest daughter's husband (the
431 one who had not been able to pay bride-wealth at the time of his marriage).[1] The latter 16 relatives came from four different villages. All but one of the total of 64 contributors of cash came from villages other than Inonda.

Contributors came from eight different localities within a range of 16 miles. There were also approximately 70 other adults who attended but did not eat or contribute. Some were from this village but the majority came from other villages in the vicinity. There were also some 30 or so children present who were not included above.

574 The majority of the persons present attended because of their
178 residence in neighbouring communities and claimed no kinship links
602 with the hosts. In earlier times, informants say, it would have been unusual for persons to attend a feast unless they were linked to the hosts by ties of kinship, marriage, or residence in the same village. Moreover, they claim, even in pre-war days it was unusual for persons from so far afield to attend a relatively small personal feast. Cash payment, it appears, is becoming an acceptable substitute for kinship links as a qualification to attend certain ceremonies.

574 Transfers of property at this feast differed markedly from those
178 in feasts of the traditional type. Firstly, the food was contributed
431 by a more restricted group, and was consumed not by all, but only by those who paid. Secondly, cash was given in place of traditional valuables (feather head-dresses, shells, arm-bands, necklaces, etc.); and thirdly, there was no reciprocal exchange for the whole of the cash was retained by the host who apparently does not acknowledge any obligation to give reciprocal help to those who brought cash, though he does recognise such an obligation to those who brought food.

574 In this village many of the older people wear only loin cloths
292 made of _tapa_, but at the feast all but four men wore imported clothing. The four who did not were older men who remained in the shadows. A few men wore cotton lap-laps, but the majority wore short trousers. All but three wore shirts - an item of clothing that is rarely seen in the village. Quite a number wore plastic sandals, though the majority were barefooted. All the women wore cotton skirts and blouses, though in their daily work an in festivals of the traditional type they almost never wear any garment above the
[302] waist. Four young men were daubed with face powder and one wore a
[301] spring of leaves in his hair. There were no other personal adornments. At taro festivals today, and at marriages, funerals and
[???]

[1] See p.74.

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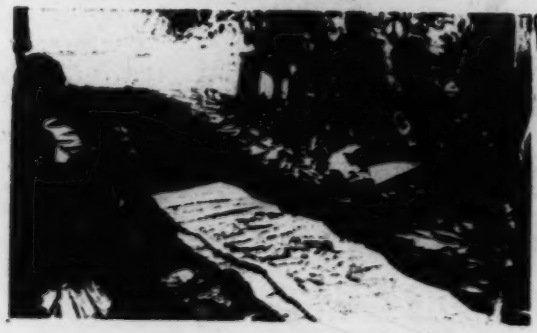
Bride and groom outside the organiser's house on the morning of the first day of the bride-wealth exchange

[516]



Transferring the cash

[p. 80]

583 and leaves which irritates the skin. This was accompanied by general merriment. It was said to be a tradition, though the people gave no explanation of its significance. The women chattered together while they prepared and cooked taro, and most men sat in the shade-house chewing betel and talking. The groom and the organizer collected firewood and erected a temporary [292] shelter of coconut fronds adjacent to the shade-house. From [302] 9.30 a.m. to 10.30 a.m. some of the groom's close female kin dressed the bride, decorating her with traditional ornaments, fastening a bark-cloth sarong around her and spraying her hair with fresh coconut oil. The groom's supporters expected the bride's father and his party to arrive at Hohota at midday. When they did not, the waiting group became restless.

The bride's father had summoned the people who were to share the bride-wealth to his house to discuss the attitude they would adopt towards the contributing party when the two groups met at Hohota. They decided to irritate the groom's supporters by [292] delaying and did not arrive until 3.00 p.m. As they approached the organizer's house, a man dressed in bark-cloth and ornaments and carrying a spear emerged from amongst them. A similarly attired man advanced from the organizer's party, who rose to their feet. The two men faced each other about thirty yards apart and, brandishing their spears, repeatedly rushed at each other and retreated for approximately five minutes.[1] During this time the bride's father's party moved quietly towards the organizer's house and the two groups sat on the ground outside.

[292] Apart from the bride and the two men carrying spears, people [301] wore normal clothing, although some had armbands and necklaces which may have been specially donned for the occasion.

The bride's father, who remained standing, asked whether the bride-wealth was ready. The organizer replied that it would not be ready until the bride's father sat down. This clearly offended him and tension quickly mounted in both groups. An argument broke out and climaxed when two of the groom's supporters accused the bride's father of setting an unreasonably high price and of lacking generosity by refusing to reduce it when the groom's father died. Thoroughly aroused, the bride's father shouted that he would not accept the payment, that he would take his daughter and in high dudgeon stalked off. The bride's brother supported him by returning $3.00 which had been given as part of the kina. Three people who each contributed $2.00 to the main payment withdrew the money during the dispute.

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1 Williams (1930:141) notes that a similar manoeuvre, asu, which involved many supporters of bride and groom, was 'highly characteristic' of bride-wealth transfers in the 1920s.

18: Dakeyne K-5 · (1962-1964) 1969
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Fig. 8. *Bark-cloth (tapa). Each manufacturer has her own special designs traced in red and black dyes on the white material*

[P.11-B]

26: Schwimmer E-5 (1966-1970) 1974
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the dead person. At ordinary harvest feasts and bride-wealth payments they are seen on display platforms along with taro and other vegetables. They are then subsidiary to taro and pigs, which are the main food gifts, but at mortuary feasts vast quantities are given, saved from the dead man's palms, which are made taboo until this feast. Dry coconut and areca are strewn on graves by affines of the deceased.

The distinctive features perceived by Orokaiva in each species should also be summarized. Coconut is believed to be a valuable adjunct to the diet of children and dogs (also chickens). In Orokaiva myths, its miraculous effect on children and dogs is often described. To the scientific observer this effect is natural enough as coconut is an important source of first-class protein for both children and dogs, who otherwise do not get much first-class protein. Coconut oil is used as a cosmetic for hair and body not only to enhance beauty but also for its magical efficacy, for the purification of man-slayers (Williams, 1930: 175, 207), and for women who are being initiated or who welcome visitors at dances. In all such cases it is the task of a male to pour the coconut milk over the persons whose magical protection is intended.

Areca, a mildly hallucinogenic fruit, is chewed by women as much as by men. When friends are sitting together, it is shared in much the same way as beer among white Australians. People offer nuts to each other but expect to come out approximately even. Visitors from other villages expect to be offered areca by their hosts. Its main physiological effect is to create a dreamy amiability and to break down hostility that might otherwise exist. Its magical uses, mostly in association with some medicine of more specific purpose, are too many to enumerate. A girl carries a bunch of areca at the ceremony which ends her seclusion after first menstruation. She normally offers it to her man at lovers' meetings.

Although I have a number of coconut and areca myths on record, I shall discuss here only one, the fullest one, which illustrates my argument most clearly. A beautiful girl, noted for her remarkable breasts, had the misfortune of killing all the young men with whom she slept. Her breasts pricked and killed them.